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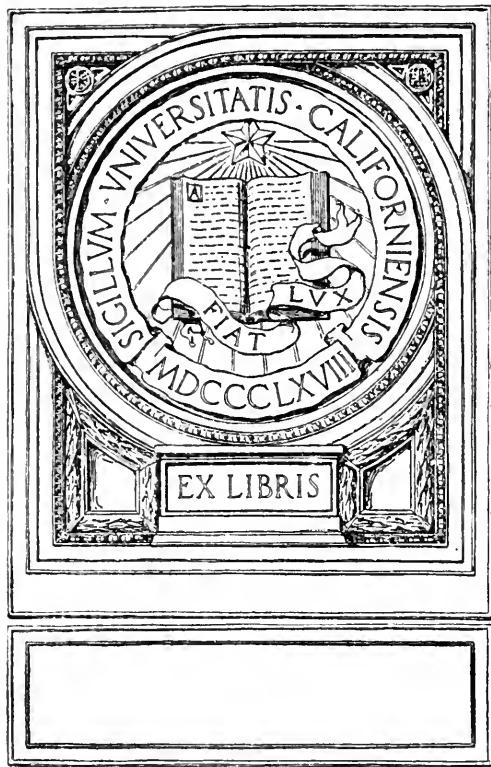
GUIDO RENI

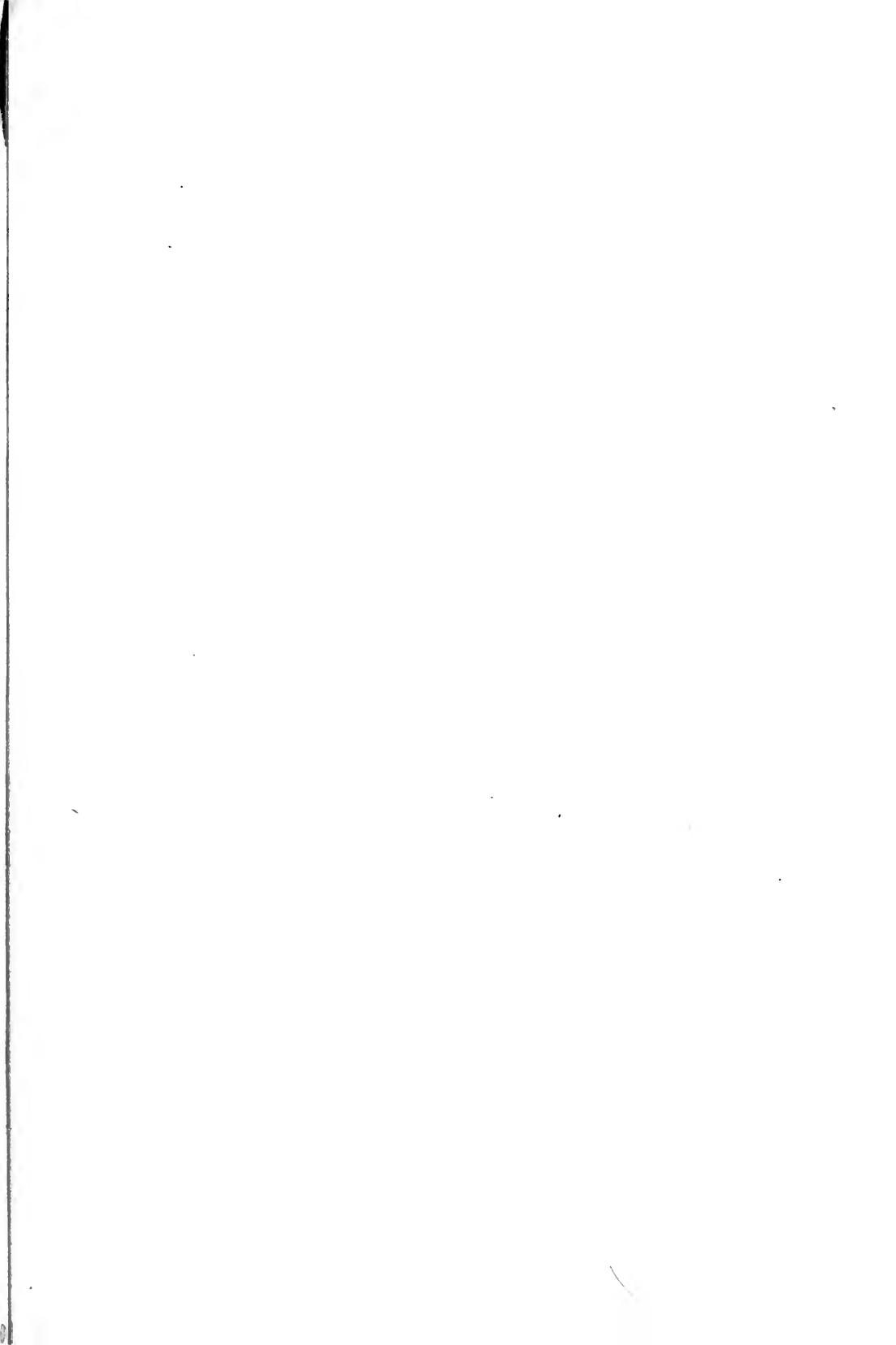


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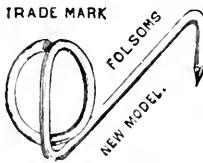
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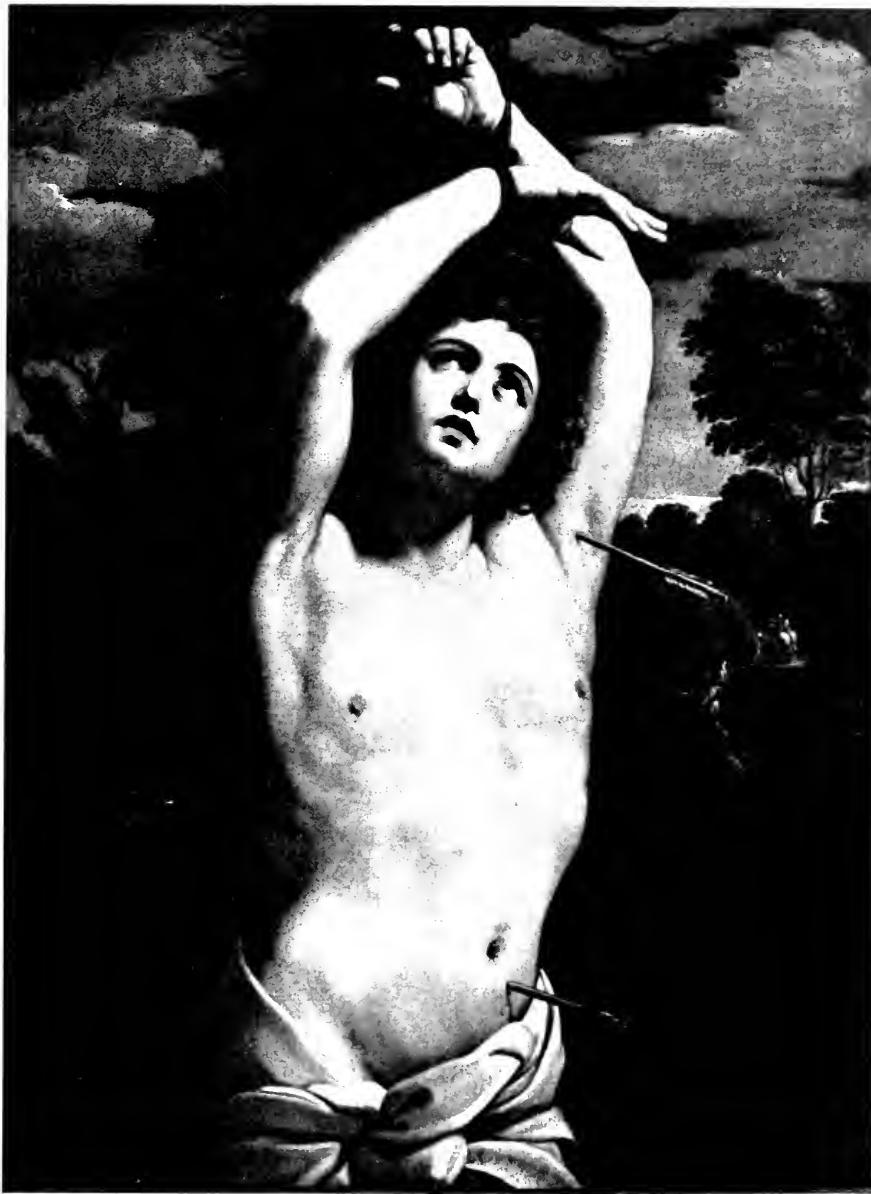
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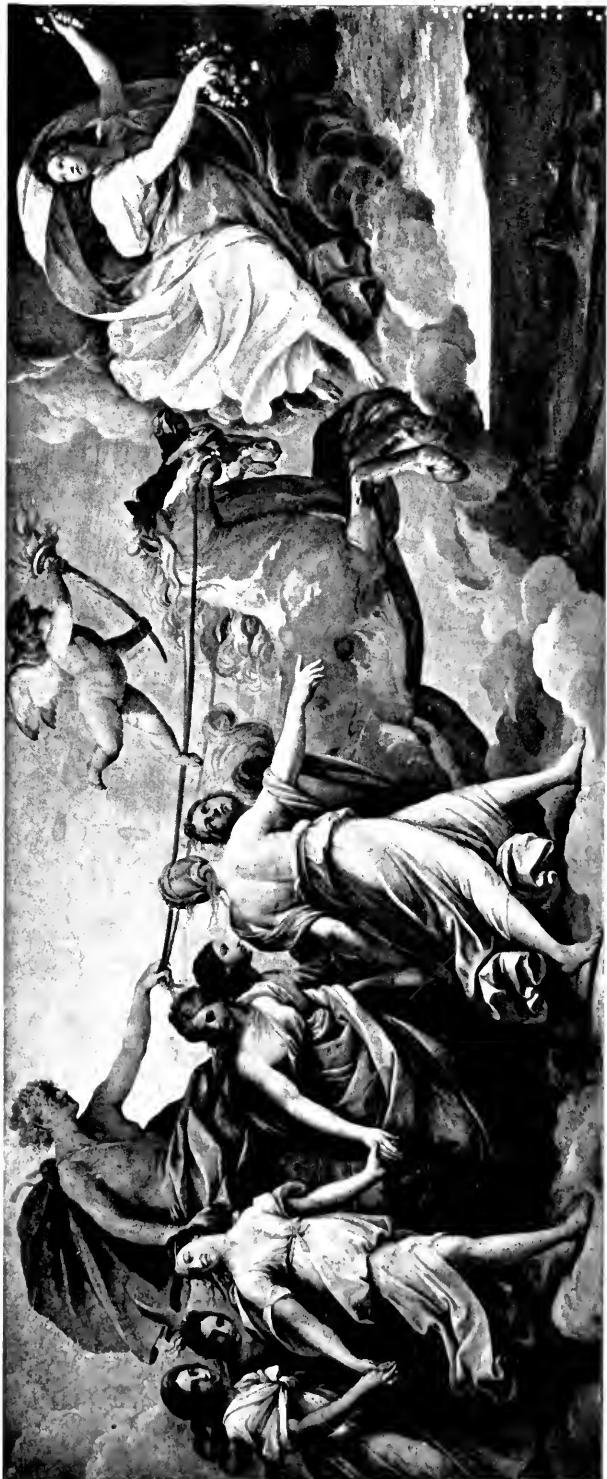
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1900-1901
AUGUST 1901



MAUSOLEUM OF AUGUSTUS
PLATE VI

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[149]

GIULIO RENI
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PORTRAIT OF GUIDO RENI, BY HIMSELF UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE

The date of execution of this portrait has not been determined, but the hair, mustache, and imperial are already white. Malvasia, Guido's biographer, describes his appearance as follows: "He was of fair stature, well-knit, and of athletic figure; of palest complexion, with color in the cheeks; the eyes sky blue; the nose with somewhat elevated nostrils that pulsated when he was angry—in short, most handsome, and of parts and members corresponding."

Guido Reni

BORN 1575: DIED 1642
SCHOOL OF BOLOGNA

M. F. SWEETSER¹

‘GUIDO RENI’

GUIDO RENI (pronounced Gwee'do Ray'nee) was born at Bologna, November 4, 1575. His father, Daniele Reni, an accomplished teacher of music and singing, immediately set about instructing the boy how to sing and to play the harpsichord, flute, and other instruments, hoping that the genius which appeared in all his lineaments would secure him eminence in music. But the old musician's hopes were fallacious; the child left his harpsichord as often as he dared, and spent his time in making sketches.

At that time the Bolognini Palace was a nursery of the arts and literature, and Daniele Reni frequently went there to assist in the concerts, taking his child with him. Now Dionisio Calvaert, a famous Flemish painter, who had a studio and a school in the palace, by some means saw certain drawings of Guido's, and these aroused his interest so thoroughly that he besought Daniele to apprentice his son to a profession for which he showed such a natural aptitude. Daniele at last consented, but with the condition that if Guido failed to make satisfactory progress within a stated period he should return to music. Guido, however, mastered the elements of his chosen profession with great rapidity, and soon began to draw from the nude and from reliefs. When he reached the age of eighteen he was promoted to the painting of his master's groundworks and to the composition of small pictures which Calvaert retouched and sold as his own works.

The famous Bolognese family of painters known as the Carracci were now in full success, and had opened their academy for the free entry of whosoever wished. Guido, becoming completely fascinated with their manner, was wont to visit Lodovico Carracci secretly and observe him while painting, until at last the Carracci manner began to appear in his own pictures. His master, Calvaert, detecting the foreign influence, flew into a rage, and rubbed out some of his most careful work; but the lad endured these reproaches in silence for many a day, until at last Calvaert attempted to punish him for using a pro-

¹ The biographical sketch, from which the account here given is abridged, is, as its author states, based upon the life of Guido Reni by Malvasia, the painter's friend and contemporary. Many passages, indeed, are but translations of Malvasia's words.

hibited color. Then he threw down his palette and fled from the studio forever. In his twentieth year, therefore, Guido entered the school of the Carracci and devoted himself to the acquisition of their style, in which, during the next few years, he executed several small compositions.

It was at this time that the painter Michelangelo da Caravaggio introduced a new and sensational manner, abounding in deep shadows and intense lights, but in other respects showing a slavish imitation of nature. The Roman nobles eulogized his works, and his fame was made, almost every gallery desiring his pictures. One of these was placed in the Casa Lambertini at Bologna, and the Carracci hastened to inspect it to see what manner of art Italy was now so praiseful of. But Annibale Carracci summoned his pupils before the new wonder in art, and spoke of it in disparagement, warning them against leaving their legitimate rules for the evanescent fame of such singular productions. "I well know," added he, "another method of making a fortunate hit. To Caravaggio's savage coloring oppose one entirely delicate and tender. Does he use lights narrow and falling? I would make them open and in the face. Does he cover up the difficulties of art under the shadows of night? I would expose under the full light of noonday the fruits of erudite and learned researches." Guido was among the disciples who heard these words, and they seemed to him the voice of a sacred oracle. He at once entered with great earnestness upon the development of these suggestions, refining the theory with prolonged studies; and at last earned the honor of being the introducer of the new manner, by which he speedily gained a reputation.

But Guido's rapid advance did not fail to awaken the jealousy of his fellow artists, and their enmity finally displayed itself in an attempt to place him under the suspicion of the Carracci, who had hitherto held him in high esteem. His quiet disposition was maligned as arrogance, his constant labor as an insatiable greediness. Incited by these conspirators, the Carracci hardened their hearts against him; and he, seeing that his rivals had triumphed, resolved to withdraw from the Academy. The occasion of the separation was as follows: Guido had received a commission to paint an Adoration of the Magi with many figures. When it was done he demanded thirty crowns, but the patron demurred, and the case was referred to the arbitration of Lodovico Carracci, who decided that, as the picture was the work of a novice, ten crowns was a good price for it. Guido bowed to this decree, but could not conceal his sense of wrong, and left the studio.

About this time, in 1598, Pope Clement VIII., about to return from Ferrara to Rome, proposed to sojourn in Bologna, and the municipality prepared to honor him by raising triumphal arches and covering the houses with tapestries and frescos. The two chief candidates for the task of painting these frescos were Cesi and Lodovico Carracci, and the votes were nearly divided between them, when, suddenly, Guido appeared as a third contestant, and was accepted as a compromise between the two.

The fame of his works had now spread through Italy; and as his Roman patrons had given him large remunerations and generous praises, he began to desire to place himself under the protection of such appreciative nobles, and

finally journeyed from Bologna to Rome with his fellow student in art, Albani. The two young men found occupation enough by day in the papal city, but their evenings were spent in playing cards, and thus, perhaps, were laid the foundations of all Guido's subsequent misfortunes.

In Rome Guido devoted himself with intense assiduity to drawing and re-drawing the antique statues, and thus attempted to familiarize himself with the spirit of Greek art; and was soon taken under the patronage of the Cavaliere d'Arpino, who began to oppose him to Caravaggio. Caravaggio, beside himself with anger, libeled Guido's pictures as affected and fantastic, and threatened to meet their designer with other weapons than brush and pencil. He doubtless would have carried out this menace but that Guido carefully avoided meeting him until he had gained enough powerful patrons to render an attack dangerous.

The Cardinal Borghese was so well pleased with Guido's work that he desired to make him his court painter with a pension and establishment; and it was accordingly arranged that Guido should receive nine crowns a month, besides the accustomed portions of bread, wine, and wood, and twenty-five crowns every half-year for the rent of his house. His works were, moreover, to be paid for severally in the form of presents. Guido's house was in the palace of the Senator Fantuzzi, and there he opened an art school which attracted scores of Roman youths. Borghese soon ordered the artist to fresco the garden pavilion of a palace which he had lately bought; the result was the marvelous picture of the 'Aurora'; and fresh commissions now poured in upon Guido in great numbers.

He was next ordered by Pope Paul V. to decorate the Papal Chapel in the new Quirinal Palace, for which he was to receive one hundred crowns a month. The pope, accustomed to go to the chapel every morning to see Guido paint, once graciously told him to replace his cap upon his head, and for the future not to remove it before him. When Paul had departed the artist said, "By my faith, he has hit it; because for the future either he should not find me here or else I should most certainly have kept my head covered." Some one replied that such a course would have been a great mistake. "No," said Guido, "I should have begged His Holiness to pardon me, feigning that the air troubled my head when bare. It is for this cause that I will never go to serve kings, because I should not wish to stand bareheaded in their presence, since such an act is not seemly for men of our profession." One day, when the pope entered unexpectedly to see the new paintings, he found Lanfranco at work on the drapery of certain figures, and exclaimed, in an angry mood, "Now I see clearly what I have for some time suspected, that in this contract Guido applies himself to getting money as earnestly as to the labor itself he devotes himself but coldly." But when the pope returned the next day Guido said, "Most blessed Father, the outlining, sketching, and ground-painting are not the things that make these pictures what they shall be; they are only as a document of Your Holiness's which is of no value until you have placed your hand to it." On another occasion the impatient pontiff said, "This work protracts itself a long while. If it had been distributed

among the other Bolognese it would already have been finished." The artist replied, "It would indeed have been finished, but it would not have been from the hand of a Guido." Nevertheless, having hastened the undertaking, though against his inclination, he completed it in seven months; and the Roman court hastened thither to admire and praise the new achievement.

At this time Guido was at cross-purposes with the papal treasurer, who told him one day that his pretensions were immoderate; adding that if such prices were to be paid, he himself would renounce his prelacy and become a painter. "I do not quite know," answered the artist, "if you could succeed in that: I know only that as a prelate I should probably do better than you, at least in the duty of paying salaries."

In spite of his successes in art, however, Guido at last grew weary of the constant envy and malice of his adversaries; and being moreover thoroughly disgusted with his treatment by the treasurer, finally resolved to leave Rome, and in 1610 suddenly departed for Bologna, resolved to abandon his profession. "Why should I wish," he said, "to waste my days in wrangling with nobles and contesting with court officials, when I ought to work in gladness and quietness. What outcries do I hear every hour about my long delays or the exorbitance of my prices! In little more than three years I have completed four grand works, each of which required all that time to do it justice, and they promised me seas and mountains; yet not only is the debt unpaid, but even my pension is complained of, which they would not do in the case of a lackey." With such captious sentiments did Guido greet the friends who came to congratulate him on his return to Bologna and on his bygone successes in Rome; and gave himself over entirely to the arrangement of the pictures and antiques that he had brought from that city. He sent out word that he should paint no more except for his own amusement, but should instead take up the traffic in ancient pictures and designs.

But Guido's rivals, who had been dismayed at his reappearance in Bologna, now reported that he had done all his wonderful works far away, but that when he returned home he had become powerless; and they also spread a report that he was a man of arrogant pretensions, full of self-conceit and confidence, but feeble in execution. Wherefore Guido at last took up his brush again as an efficient weapon against these persecutors, and accepted every commission that was offered him, working rapidly and with a masterly freedom. His first important work was the 'Massacre of the Innocents.'

In the meantime, when the pope heard that the artist was no longer in Rome, and that, moreover, he had gone away so dissatisfied as to have sworn never to set foot there again, he flew into a frenzy of rage. The cardinal-nephew endeavored to condone the offence of the treasurer by stigmatizing Guido as "wishing to absorb more money than all the others together, laggardly in his work, and impertinent in manner." But the pope cried out, "No more, no more! We know our Guido well and have always found him courteous and modest. If he demanded too much, what business was it of the treasurer's? Did he pay it out of his own money? Let Guido be given whatever he demands if he will return."

The papal mandate was borne to Guido at Bologna by the cardinal-legate himself, who was not politic enough to treat the artist's refusal with dexterity, and spoke menacingly to him. Whereupon Guido boldly answered: "I absolutely will not go to Rome; I had rather be torn to pieces. It is not that I do not desire to kiss the feet of the pope once more, but his ministers do such things as I know are not only not intended by His Holiness, but are also displeasing to him." These words offended the cardinal-legate so deeply that he attempted to throw the artist into prison; but Guido, who had meanwhile been invited by the kings of France and Spain to reside at their courts, resolved to expatriate himself rather than become the inmate of a Bolognese dungeon. He therefore hid himself until an opportunity should arise for him to flee; but his friend, the Marquis Facchenetti, gained him over with sweet words. "This," said he, "is an affair concerning your pontiff, before whose throne bow even those royal crowns to whose protection you wish to flee; so that without the participation of His Holiness you could find no refuge there. Wherefore you must make a virtue of necessity, and return voluntarily." So Guido accepted the advice of his noble protector, and forthwith set out again for Rome.

As he approached Rome he was met by a long line of carriages pertaining to the Roman cardinals and princes who vied with each other for the honor of bearing him into the city. The artist was liberally remunerated for his past labors; a carriage was placed at his disposal; various delicate articles of food and wine were frequently sent to him; and it was arranged that he should draw from the treasury eighty crowns a fortnight beside his usual pension.

But these honors did not fall upon Guido without causing the courtiers to murmur at such a promotion shown to a mere painter; and the treasurer made a renewed outcry against him, charging that the work with which he was now engaged at Santa Maria Maggiore was perversely delayed that he might the longer draw his pension. Nevertheless, the chapel was finished in due time, and the pope visited it with a cortège of princes and prelates, and so admired and praised the frescos that Guido was advised to stay some time at court, since the applause attending his last work appeared to be repairing the prejudices of the long delay and heavy expense. But, finding himself unseasonably cut off from his allowance at the banker's, and desiring to avoid further trouble with the treasurer, Guido again departed from Rome, and returned to his own city.

The Senate of Bologna now commissioned him to paint a Pietà with the patron saints of the city. This was finished in 1616. In 1618 there came an order from Genoa that one of the best artists of Bologna should be engaged to paint a picture of the Assumption. Guido was suggested on all sides as the one who ought to execute it, but he demanded the enormous price of 1,000 crowns, though his former master, Lodovico Carracci, offered to do the work for 500 crowns. But nevertheless the younger painter received the commission; and, referring to the occasion on which he had left the Carracci studio, made Lodovico aware that he had now found how to get more than ten crowns for his pictures. Between 1614 and 1620 Guido was invited by the

Duke of Mantua to visit his court and paint certain frescos; but he was then so busily engaged that he sent his best pupils, Gessi and Sementi. During the same period Guido was urged to visit Ravenna by Cardinal Aldobrandini, and went thither. The painting of 'The Falling of the Manna' was the chief production of this journey.

In 1621 the superb chapel of St. Januarius at Naples was approaching completion, and several of the foremost artists of Italy were summoned to decorate its walls. Among these were Domenichino, Lanfranco, and Guido. But their engagement lasted only a short time on account of the fierce hostility of the Neapolitan artists. Guido had designed several cartoons for the chapel and had commenced to fresco when the Neapolitans began their persecutions. He was followed through the streets by armed ruffians; letters came to him threatening poison and the stiletto; and his servant Domenico was slain. Afterwards, another of Guido's men was caught by the Neapolitans, who gave him a sound drubbing, telling him that such should be the fate of every one who roamed about in cities not his own, taking the bread from the mouths of the residents thereof. Guido was greatly alarmed, and secretly fled from Naples and went to Rome, where he remained busily engaged for a long time.

During one of his later sojourns in Rome, Guido was commissioned to paint a picture of the Repulse of Attila by St. Leo, to be placed in St. Peter's Church; and the sum of 400 crowns was advanced on account thereof. Nevertheless, he delayed so long that Cardinal Pamfili (afterwards Pope Innocent x.) summoned him before the Congregation and stated the grievances against him. The papal treasurer also summoned him, and rudely demanded to know if he never intended to begin the work for which he had been paid. The artist, astounded and embittered, answered with more piquancy than relevancy, "My Lord Cardinal, the pope can make as many of your equals as he chooses, but to make my equals rests with no power but that of God."

The truth was that Guido's most malevolent failing had now involved him in serious difficulties, for he had already lost at the gaming-table the entire amount which he had received for the Attila picture. He desired to depart from Rome, but was in great trouble because he could not repay this unearned advance and his other debts. At last he borrowed enough money, deposited it to the credit of the Reverend Fabric and fled to Bologna.

When Guido once more took up his abode in his native city the saying that a prophet has no honor in his own country was for once untrue, for he was adored by the people, esteemed by the nobles, and served by all; nor did any one ever pass through Bologna, however great they might be, but that they esteemed it a favor if they might see Guido, and gaze upon him while he worked.

He was accustomed to paint with his mantle about him, gathered gracefully over his left arm. His pupils, of whom he had a great number—at one period no less than eighty, drawn from nearly every nation of Europe—vied with each other to serve him, esteeming themselves fortunate to have opportunities to clean his brushes or to prepare his palette. He had no dearth

of models in the multitude of youths and disciples which surrounded him; but all that Guido cared of them was to refresh his memory by viewing their limbs and torsos, and after that he could adjust them and correct their imperfections. In the same way any head sufficed him for a model. Being once besought by Count Aldovrandi to confide in him who the lady was of whom he availed himself in drawing his beautiful Madonnas and Magdalens, he made his color-grinder, a fellow of scoundrelly visage, sit down, and commanding him to look upward, drew from him such a marvelous head of a saint that it seemed as if it had been done by magic. Better than any other artist he understood how to portray upturned faces, and boasted that he knew a hundred ways of making heads with their eyes lifted to heaven. He often declared that his favorite models were the 'Venus of Medici' and the wonderful heads in the Niobe group.

He was always in great fear of sorcery and poisoning, and for that reason could not endure women in his house, abhorring to have any dealings with them, and, when such were unavoidable, hurrying them through as rapidly as possible. Old women were his especial detestation, and he always fled from them, and lamented grievously if one of them should appear when he was about beginning or closing some commission.

During the last fifteen years of his life Guido was, as has already been hinted, the prey of an inordinate passion for gambling, and lost much of that illustrious fame which had become so dear to him. Being often reduced to extreme necessities by heavy losses, and having contracted debts which it was beyond his ability to pay, he gave himself to painting hastily and unworthily, borrowing moreover from all his friends, and selling his time in the studio at so much an hour.

At one time such pains and humiliations seemed to have taught him a salutary lesson, and as soon as he had paid off his debts he deposited his gains in the bank for two entire years. But this was only a truce, for at the end of those two years he returned to his old vice, and began once more to play heavily. As if to deal him a harder blow than ever, fate favored him at first. In three weeks his gains amounted to 4,000 pistoles, and his friends advised him to be content therewith, to invest the money, and to forswear gambling forever. But he disdained all advice, with the result that in three evenings he lost the 4,000 pistoles and also all the funds which he had accumulated. But the intrepid old artist spoke of his misfortune as a matter of destiny. Nay, he even rejoiced at it, saying, "Since I got those detestable winnings I have never known the tranquillity which I enjoyed before they came to afflict my liberty. Now, please God, I have come out from idleness and resumed my duties. I have lost vice, and re-won virtue." With these and similar arguments he sealed the mouths of all, and praised the refractory inclination that now more than ever took full possession of him. During a month in his rooms, and two more at the clubs, his adversaries won everything from him; wherefore, pledging more and more his work, he did not refuse to accept payments on his time far in advance, until his debts finally passed the limit of possibility of payment, however far his life might be prolonged.

He now observed that his friends had grown cold, that the dilettanti kept away from his first exhibitions, and that in the assemblies where he had formerly been attended with such great courtesy he was now shunned. He prepared a number of canvases and sat down before them to divert his mind from its crushing cares; and also endeavored to complete many of the unfinished works then in his studio; but, wearied and confused by their multiplicity and hotly besieged by creditors, he lost heart, and did no more than to stand musing. Sometimes he suddenly started up, and for a long time walked to and fro rapidly, talking to himself and sighing, so that it was feared he would pass into a delirium.

Yet, during the last decade of his life, troubled though he was in many ways, Guido executed several excellent works. He had numerous commissions from ultramontane sovereigns as well as from those of Italy, and painted a 'Venus' for the Duke of Bavaria, an 'Europa' for the King of Poland, and a 'Madonna' for the King of Spain. He was also summoned to France to paint a portrait of the king, but he declined this invitation, simply saying, "I am not a portrait-painter." His last picture was a 'Nativity,' and on this he was engaged at the time of his death.

Guido fell sick of fever on the sixth of August, while the sun was in Leo. Many knights and nobles called upon him to console and inspirit him, and among these were the Senator Guidotti, who finally induced him to allow five celebrated doctors to examine his case, and to be removed from his chambers, where he was annoyed by the noises in the square. As soon as it was known in Bologna that he desired to be carried to other quarters, many of the noblest families vied to receive him into their houses; but Guido refused all offers, and chose the house of the merchant Ferri, whither he went in a horse-litter. Here he was served and attended as a great prince, and always watched over by Ferri; and to solace his weary hours concerts of musical bands were ordered, and the performers, passing up and down the street, filled it with great and continuous harmony.

In the meantime the sacrament was exposed in various churches, and many religious orders were supplicating in Guido's behalf. Not only in Bologna, but also in the surrounding cities, and most of all in Rome, prayers and vows were ascending for the recovery of the greatest living artist in Italy. But at last, strengthened by the sacrament of extreme unction, and in the arms of the Capuchin fathers, whom he had always held in great veneration, he breathed out his soul, at two o'clock of the night, on Monday, August 18, 1642, which was the sixty-seventh year of his age.

His body, robed in a Capuchin dress, was carried to the sepulcher with the greatest pomp and honor. So vast was the crowd of all ranks and ages, and the concourse to see him, both in the streets through which he was borne and in the Church of San Domenico, where he was laid in state, that the like had not been seen before, even in the great processions wherein the city annually celebrated its deliverance from the Plague.

The Art of Guido Reni

PAUL MANTZ

‘LES CHEFS-D’ŒUVRE DE LA PEINTURE ITALIENNE’

AFTER the death of Michelangelo and of Titian, and in spite of the sun-set glory which Tintoretto and Veronese were shedding upon Venice, the shadows began to gather over the art that for three hundred years had made Italy glorious. The Roman school did not survive Giulio Romano; Michelangelo's disciples were bent on violence; the style which under Correggio's touch had been living grace faded into insipidity; and even in Venice the predominance of the merely decorative had become a weakness. All the schools of Italy were ready to fall; and they fell together.

The immediate causes of the decadence are evident enough: pupils proved false to the teachings of their masters, imitated their weaknesses rather than their excellences, and piled falsification upon error, and exaggeration upon falsification. But beneath the outward and superficial symptoms there were underlying and moral causes for the downfall. During the last twenty years of the sixteenth century the whole social standard of Italy had been lowered. Her republics existed no longer; municipal pride was dead; and she had become the prey of rulers who were but the hirelings of foreign monarchs. As a result, there ensued that intellectual decline which inevitably accompanies political decadence, and with all the usual symptoms. Rhetoric was esteemed above matter, wit above wisdom; and the simple earnestness and energy upon which only can great art thrive was, if not extinct, out of fashion.

It was at this critical juncture that the city of Bologna put herself forward, towards the close of the sixteenth century, as the new art preceptress to Italy. The impulse came from a family of Bolonese painters, the Carracci, who, seeing clearly enough that the old methods and traditions had lost force, proposed to substitute new ones of their own devising. It was the theory of their teaching to revive the great qualities of the masters of the beginning of the century. They proposed to achieve, by selection and amalgamation, a combination of all excellences. Their pupils were, by imitation, to unite in their own works the best qualities of Michelangelo, Titian, Correggio, Raphael, Tibaldi, Primaticcio, and, to complete the ideal mixture, something of the grace of Parmigiano! They made the attempt bravely. Lanzi has pointed out how Annibale Carracci strove to exemplify his teachings by imitating in a single work Veronese in one figure, Correggio in another, and Titian and Parmigiano in the remainder. Could the folly of the theory have a clearer exposition?

Nevertheless, the school of the Carracci had great vogue, and produced many pupils illustrious in their own day; but it by no means had the entire field to itself. Hardly had its “system” been announced when protests began to be heard from all parts of Italy. The loudest, most emphatic, and most influential voice was that of the Neapolitan painter Michelangelo da Caravaggio.

Caravaggio, after a period of study in Venice, had arrived in Rome ready to throw down the gauntlet to all rivals whosoever; but for the Carracci in especial he professed the most superb disdain. He condemned their teachings wholly. A painter should, he asserted, imitate none of the great masters. Nature was the true and only teacher; and if the artist, pursuing nature, should encounter ugliness, triviality, and baseness, he should not shut his eyes, but should record them unflinchingly. And so Caravaggio took, for choice, as his models criminals and bohemians, drunkards and profligates. He was, however, equipped with a vigorous personality, talent, skill, and a profound knowledge of chiaroscuro; and his undeniable power gained him so wide an influence that, as Nicolas Poussin said of him long afterwards, "the man seemed born to ruin painting." He introduced types of vulgar mold, set the fashion for contrasts of light and shade out of all true proportion, and in the way of discoloring the Italian palette finished what the Carracci had begun.

The history of Italian art at this time is much like the history of the progress of some malady, with its symptoms, its recoveries, and relapses; and it was at this stage of the disease that the seventeenth century dawned, and the work of the youthful Guido Reni began to attract public attention. Those who recognized the parlous condition of art now turned to him, as they had before turned to the Carracci, as a possible savior.

For a time it really did seem as if Guido might arrest the decline; but before long his own moral weakness incapacitated him for the battle. A gambler of unlimited prodigality, and finding himself obliged to regain by his brush the money he had thrown away at the gaming-table, he abused his own facility. How many, alas! how very many, canvases he painted during the latter part of his life—Ecce Homos, Madonnas, Magdalens, St. Sebastians, and the like—which seemed as though he might have "improvised them in three hours or less," as Malvasia tells us he sometimes did, and which were manifestly painted with but one aim, that of pleasing, with a minimum of labor, the empty, vapid taste of the day. They multiplied under his brush so rapidly as to swamp his own more meritorious productions; so that instead of becoming the savior of Italian art, Guido but hastened its downfall.

Yet he was not, as some modern critics seem to regard him, always the hasty painter of insipidities. During one part of his career at least he knew what good art was; and as an executant he often exhibited really great qualities. Before he began to paint with the sole object of gaining money as rapidly as possible he drew easily and correctly, painted broadly, and frequently composed with exemplary skill. His coloring was sometimes silvery and delicate, although too often, even in his better works, he placed the high lights in over-violent opposition to opaque and muddy shadows, and his color schemes seem to lack freshness.

But could Guido have redeemed Italian art even had he always painted at his best? There can be but one answer: no. The inner flame, the spark of genius, was lacking in him from the first. He was a skilful practitioner, and

in the decadent epoch to which he belonged occupies a conspicuous place; but he could never have ranked with the great masters.—FROM THE FRENCH

W. M. ROSSETTI

IN 'ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA'

GUIDO RENI'S best works have beauty, great amenity, artistic feeling, and high accomplishment of manner, but are all alloyed by a certain core of commonplace; in his worst pictures the commonplace swamps everything, and Guido has flooded European galleries with trashy and empty pretentiousness, all the more noxious in that its apparent grace of form misleads the unwary into approval, and the dilettante dabbler into cheap raptures.

WRITERS on art have generally agreed to assign to Guido Reni, as to Raphael, three successive of styles or "manners."

The first dates from about the time he left the studio of the Carracci and set up for himself. At this period he preserved the impress of the Carracci style, but was evidently still more influenced by the manner of Michelangelo da Caravaggio, in spite of his biographer's statement that he was at this time attempting to introduce a new method quite opposite to that of the Neapolitan master. Guido's works in this early Carracci-Caravaggio style—his first recognized manner—show an energy and dignity lacking in his later achievements. They are marked by a distinct leaning toward naturalism in the treatment of large, well-grouped, strongly muscled figures, though there is sometimes an evident effort to exhibit an anatomical knowledge plainly out of harmony with the temperament of a painter so naturally predisposed to grace. These features, combined with smoky, reddish tones, strong contrasts of light and shade, and overblack shadows, give these early pictures an impressive, sometimes even a violent aspect. Perhaps his best works in this manner are the 'Madonna della Pietà' and the 'Massacre of the Innocents,' both in the Bologna Gallery.

Soon after Guido's arrival in Rome the influence of Raphael's works became apparent in his pictures, and to his previous manner a second gradually succeeded. His former style became simpler and less stilted, his color warmer and more agreeable. In this second style he painted the world-famous 'Aurora' of the Rospigliosi Palace.

The happy period of transition was brief, however. The Carracci-Caravaggio strength gradually faded from his work, until he seemed about to become merely a paler, fatigued, and enervated Raphael; and then, at last, Guido struck into his third manner, in which he continued to paint during the rest of his life, his work growing feebler and feebler as his character weakened and his haste, due to his pressing need of money, increased. It is nevertheless the works in this last style which gained him his wide contemporary popularity, and by which he is chiefly known to-day. The style is usually called his "silver manner," from its coloring, which, at its best, is of a delicate pearly silveriness, but which too often degenerated into lividity or mere pallid muddiness. His handling at this time had become wonderfully facile, and there is almost always a certain easy grace of line and composition; but the

types he now produced, and repeated *ad nauseam*, because of their affectation, poverty of expression, monotony of gesture, insipid ideality, vapid generalization without character, and mere empty, banal grace, are at their worst almost insupportable to our modern eyes. Among the better examples of Guido's work in this last style may be mentioned 'The Assumption of the Virgin,' in Munich, and the 'St. Sebastian' of the Capitoline Gallery in Rome.

H. TAINE

"VOYAGE EN ITALIE: ROME ET NAPLES"

GUIDO RENI was an admired, fortunate, worldly artist, who accommodated himself to the taste of his day, and aimed not at nature, but at making an agreeable effect upon the spectator's mind; and having once hit upon a taking type, he repeated it constantly, painting not living beings but combinations of pleasing contours.

Tastes change as natures change. In Guido's day true energy, real passion, and native force had disappeared. Society was trifling, gallant, satiated. The bold, free spirit of former times was gone; and effeminate, fastidious people dislike simple and strong features. They require conventional smoothness, sweet, languishing smiles, curiously intermingled tints, sentimental expressions—in a word, the pleasing and far-fetched in everything. Guido Reni gave this society exactly what it demanded—conventional physiognomies and delicate, languishing, effeminate types of expression quite unknown to the stalwart old masters.—FROM THE FRENCH

J. BUISSON

IN JOUIN'S "CHEFS-D'ŒUVRE"

OUR own era is one that has little patience with mere rhetoric, whether in art or letters. Never were lovers of pictures so alive to the appeal of the naïve innocence that marks the childhood of art, never more sensitive to the charm of its blooming adolescence, never more swayed by the power of its full virility; but let art betray the least taint of decadence, and, no matter what its redeeming qualities, we turn away in disdain. Moreover, modern criticism has come to make almost a fetish of what is called "sincerity" in painting, so that it is indeed an ill time to attempt an impartial judgment of those seventeenth-century Italians whom our grandfathers viewed with such different eyes.

When the wonderful cluster of schools that glorified the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—the veritable Pleiads of art—had declined, the city of Bologna sought to become the laggard instructress to Italy in painting. But what remained for her to teach? All roads had been explored, all achievements won; she stood at the end of the path of progress. She had acquired, it is true, a certain facile virtuosity in the practice of what she had learned from others; but her painters, in spite of their pretensions and their air of triumphant mastery, were after all but rhetoricians—helpless victims of those inevitable laws which make artistic progress subordinate to the status of the epoch and the race. To have advanced in spite of the ebbing tide, they would have required even more strength, more originality, than was needed by their greater predecessors; and it is interesting to speculate what

rank the Carracci, Domenichino, and Guido Reni, with their unquestionably rich natural endowments, might have held had they but been born half a century earlier.

Guido, the most celebrated, the most spoiled by contemporary applause, seems indeed to have begun his career as one destined to do more than play the rôle, with which he so soon became content, of complaisant reflector of the popular taste of his day and generation. When he left the school of the Carracci, and while he felt the influence of Caravaggio, he manifestly studied nature lovingly and carefully, and painted the strongest and the sanest of his works—the ‘Massacre of the Innocents’ and the great ‘Pietà,’ for examples—which betoken energy, a first-hand observation of nature, and some appreciation of the beauty of virility.

But the immediate popularity which came to him in Rome seems to have undermined his stamina, both moral and artistic. He fell a victim to his own easy prowess of execution, to the weak, conventional grace of his own feminine types, and to the search for a superficial expression of unreal emotion. Yet it was by the pictures in this last style that he gained his overwhelming popularity, and it is by these very pictures that contemporary critics seem to judge him wholly.

It must be acknowledged, however, that even this partial judgment is not fundamentally unjust. Despite the promise of his youth, it seems clear that Guido could never have become a great personal luminary, even under more propitious circumstances. The very facility with which his nature submitted to every varying influence marks him as destined from the first to be no more at best than a brilliant reflector in art.—FROM THE FRENCH

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

“GUIDE DE L’AMATEUR AU MUSÉE DU LOUVRE”

A PAINTER whose real gift was the gift of gracefulness, Guido gives us canvases remarkable for ingenious arrangement of composition, facility in drawing, and freedom and certitude in handling. But it was not these features that gained him his great popularity. It was because he invented and multiplied a type which, though it possesses no strength and expresses no true emotion, appeals, because of a certain graceful, sentimental, languid melancholy, that is distinctly mundane and sometimes even coquettish, to those who are not yet equipped to appreciate art of a higher calibre.—FROM THE FRENCH

The Works of Guido Reni

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

“THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL”

PLATE I

“THE single devotional figures of the Archangel Michael,” writes Mrs. Jameson, “usually depict him as combining the characters of captain of the heavenly host and conqueror of the powers of hell. The only simi-

ilar representation of St. Michael which as a work of art can compare with that by Raphael in the Louvre is this celebrated picture by Guido, in the Church of Santa Maria della Concezione (or dei Cappuccini), Rome. The moment chosen is the same, and the treatment similar. In Guido's picture the archangel, in blue cuirass, red mantle, and violet scarf, poised on out-spread wings, sets his foot on the head of Lucifer; in one hand he brandishes a sword and in the other holds a chain with which he is about to bind down the demon in the bottomless pit. The attitude has been justly criticised, for the grace is somewhat mannered; but Forsyth is too severe when he talks of the 'air of a dancing-master.' Yet we do not think about the attitude when we look at Raphael's St. Michael; and in Guido's it is the first thing that strikes us. On the other hand, the head of Guido's archangel, with its blending of masculine and feminine graces, serene purity of brow, and flow of the golden hair, surely suggests divinity."

It was a tradition that Guido took revenge on Cardinal Pamili (afterwards Pope Innocent x.), who had summoned him before the Congregation in Rome on account of his delay in executing the picture he had contracted to paint for St. Peter's Church, by representing him as Satan in this canvas. Guido, however, protested that there was not the slightest truth in the report; but whether by accident or design, the face of the fiend in the picture shows no slight resemblance to the well-known portraits of the pope.

'The Archangel Michael,' one of Guido's most famous works, is painted in his second manner, when he was strongly feeling Raphael's influence.

'BEATRICE CENCI' (SO-CALLED)

PLATE II

THE most generally popular and widely copied portrait in Rome is this so-called 'Beatrice Cenci,' by Guido Reni. It eminently possesses the quality of popular appeal that Guido so well understood how to impart, yet it cannot rank among his greater works; and it is questionable whether its celebrity is not rather founded upon the interest attaching to the pathetic name of Beatrice than upon intrinsic merit of the painting itself.

Beatrice's sad and terrible story, which has been so often repeated by poets, novelists, and chroniclers, stands briefly thus: She was the young and motherless daughter of Francesco Cenci, a wealthy Roman patrician, whose profligacy and wickedness of all kinds was so monstrous as to startle even the Roman society of the end of the sixteenth century. He imprisoned his second wife, Lucrezia, and his daughter, in a remote and solitary castle in the Apennines, and there subjected them to barbarous treatment of all sorts, and at last so grievously insulted his daughter as to palliate and almost excuse parricide. It was believed that, under the stress of this treatment, Beatrice, then about seventeen years old, bribed certain ruffians to murder her father. Arrested and brought to Rome for trial, she was, after having been tortured, condemned and executed. It was believed that she was extremely beautiful, though of her appearance we have no description. The legend, with some circumstance, relates further that the present portrait of her was painted by Guido in prison, and on the eve of her execution.

That some of the details of this romantic story are false, and that in the light of modern researches Beatrice seems to deserve less pity than has been accorded her, does not concern us here. What does concern us is that it is impossible that Guido should have visited Beatrice in prison, or, indeed, that he could ever have seen her at all. She was executed in 1599; and after a careful weighing of all the evidence, Signor Bertolotti, director of the State Archives in Rome, has practically proved that Guido could not have first arrived in that city before 1608. Moreover, his biographers make no allusion to any portrait of Beatrice—an unlikely omission had he intended this canvas as a likeness, even if an imaginary one, of the romantic girl whose story was so fresh in the public mind. Indeed, the tradition that the picture is her likeness cannot be traced back further than about ninety years from the present time, and it is probable that its title was given it by some poetically minded individual who conceived that so might Beatrice have appeared.

A number of critics, their faith shaken, perhaps, by the discovery that its title was a misnomer, have questioned whether the picture is from Guido's hand at all; but their skepticism seems unfounded. There is no historical evidence either way, and the tradition that ascribes the work to Guido seems sufficiently conclusive when borne out by its general style and technical execution. Moreover, as a recent writer, Mr. J. A. Trollope, has pointed out in an interesting review of all the evidence concerning the picture ('Magazine of Art,' 1881), Guido painted at least two other heads—that of a woman in the group of three in the lower left-hand corner of his 'St. Andrew Adoring the Cross,' and that of the Hour nearest the left-hand corner of the 'Aurora'—the features of which so strikingly resemble those of the Cenci portrait that it seems unquestionable that all three were painted from the same model.

The picture hangs in the Barberini Palace, Rome.

'ST. SEBASTIAN.'

PLATE III

ST. SEBASTIAN was, according to the legend, a noble youth who commanded a company in the Praetorian Guards under the Emperor Diocletian, with whom he was an especial favorite. He had secretly become a Christian, however, and when two of his friends were being tortured on account of their religion, Sebastian revealed his own faith by exhorting them to die steadfast. Then the emperor, in spite of his love for the youth, ordered him to be bound to a tree and shot to death with arrows. The sentence was carried out, and Sebastian was left for dead; but when his friends came to bear away his body it was found that he still breathed, and a Christian widow, Irene, nursed him in secret until he recovered. But no sooner was he restored than Sebastian, instead of fleeing from Rome, as his friends besought him to do, went boldly to the gate of the emperor's palace, and when Diocletian passed on his way to the capitol, cried out, "I am Sebastian, whom God hath delivered from thy hand that I might testify to the faith of Jesus Christ and plead for His servants." Then Diocletian, in a rage, commanded that Sebastian be beaten to death with clubs in the circus, which was done.

As may be imagined, this picturesque legend has furnished an attractive theme to many painters, and the subject proved especially alluring to Guido, since it gave him an opportunity to depict an Apollo-like figure in the bloom of youth (a vehicle for graceful form and fine anatomical modeling) yet in the throes of half-ecstatic agony—a combination that, under his hand, was sure to make a strong appeal to the sentimental. He repeated the composition with variations in the minor details at least seven times. The present picture, in the Capitoline Gallery, Rome, is perhaps the best of these replicas. The opaque shadows and the greenish hue of the flesh mark it as a product of Guido's last manner.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

PLATE IV

GUIDO was especially celebrated as a painter of Assumptions, a subject which he repeated no less than ten times. He usually chose, as here, to depict the Virgin in a glory, with outstretched arms and face upturned, borne to Heaven by angels and cupids.

'The Assumption' shown in our plate is from the Munich Gallery. Although one of Guido's best works in his third manner, it is not free from the insipidity that marred most of his later work.

YOUTHFUL BACCHUS

PLATE V

THIS merry little picture, in the Pitti Palace, Florence, comes as rather a relief from the hand of a painter whose favorite subjects were saints in religious ecstasies and agonies.

The boy Bacchus, with his crown of grapes and garb of skin, his cup and wine bottle, and his attendant genius, smiles out of the picture with such a living sparkle in his eyes that it is clear that Guido was here inspired by no conception of classic antiquity, but by some mischievous little lad who, perhaps, ran about his studio, and that he painted in a playful vein. The figure of Bacchus is firmly drawn and modeled, but that of the attendant sprite is less careful in execution.

AURORA

PLATE VI

THIS fresco, which adorns the ceiling of the garden pavilion of the Rospijiosi Palace in Rome, was painted in Guido's best period, during his first sojourn in Rome, when he was beginning to come under the spell of Raphael. It is, by general consent, regarded as his masterpiece.

It pictures the bringers of dawn gliding over clouds still tinted with the fading shadows of night. About the advancing car of the sun-god, Apollo, the Hours dance; before it sails Aurora herself on golden clouds, showering roses upon the sleeping earth, and above a youthful cherub bearing a flaming torch personifies the morning star. Below are seen the sea and land, still obscured by shadows.

"The grace of the arrangement, the rhythm of the gestures, and the striking onward sense of movement seize the spectator at first glance," writes M. Buisson. "He realizes the feeling of Taine when he writes of the 'joyous-

ness, the complete pagan amplitude, of these blooming goddesses, with their hands interlinked, all dancing as if at some antique fête.' The twining arms, the flying draperies, which merge into sweeps of carefully calculated line, seem to accelerate the forward movement of the Hours, which is again hastened by the galloping horses, until it seems to culminate naturally in the aerial flight of Aurora herself. The grace of the poses, the broad, supple lines, the exactitude of drawing, the sureness of the composition, the distribution of light and shade, and the vitality of the whole, witness a consummate skill."

The coloring of the 'Aurora,' too, is more successful than Guido's usual achievements in this respect. The hair and flesh of Apollo are of a dull golden hue; to this tint the yellowish-red robe of the nymph nearest him answers, and the color then gradually shades from blue to white and from green to white on either side, while the dun-colored horses harmonize with the clouds. Behind the clouds is a yellow sky, while below one sees a bit of cool-toned landscape, giving the blue note essential to balance the draperies.

On a closer examination the weaknesses of the picture are apparent enough: there is some lack of unity in the composition; the Hours are not of a high type of beauty nor ethereal enough for the part they play; and there is more than a suspicion of affectation in many of their poses. Above all, the figure of Apollo, on which the attention naturally centers, is disappointing. But, all detractions admitted, the 'Aurora' is unquestionably a masterpiece of technical skill, admirably fulfilling its decorative intention, and replete with beauty and vitality; and Burckhardt pronounces it "taken all for all, the most accomplished work of its century."

'MADONNA DELLA PIETÀ' [DETAIL]

PLATE VII

THIS picture, now the chief treasure of the Bologna Gallery, was ordered of Guido, after his return from Rome, by the Senate of Bologna, which commissioned him to paint a Pietà that should include the five saints most closely connected with civic traditions. It is evident that the painter put forth all his powers upon it, and it ranks as one of his best works, showing a vigor of conception and of execution rare with him. It gives too, in spite of the distinct separation between the upper and the lower portions, the highest evidence of Guido's skill in composition. The upper portion is reproduced in our plate. In the lower half of the picture are grouped St. Petronius, the patron of Bologna, St. Carlo Borromeo, St. Francis, St. Proculus, and St. Dominic. The picture was completed in 1616, in Guido's early style.

'ST. JOHN PREACHING IN THE WILDERNESS'

PLATE VIII

ACCORDING to his accredited biographer, Malvasia, Guido depicted this subject three times. The present example, in the Dulwich Gallery, London, represents the Baptist as a youth, seated upon a rock, his figure, about life-size, relieved against a cloudy sky and wooded background, with a group of eight small figures at the right. About his hips is a gray drapery. The picture, probably an early work to judge from the brickish red of the flesh, is

as a whole superior in animation and vitality to Guido's usual achievements. "There is," writes Hazlitt, "a wildness and gusto about the figure of St. John, and an exaltation in his face, which is in full accord with the subject."

'MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS'

PLATE IX

ON Guido's return from Rome in 1610 he had to face a storm of detraction from his rivals, who industriously circulated the report that his best days were over and that his star was waning. His answer was this picture, commenced soon after his arrival in Bologna, in which he touches his high-water mark of dramatic power.

"Avoiding the depiction of the actual scene of butchery," writes Burckhardt, "Guido has nevertheless expressed the cruelty of the murderers; and thanks to the truly architectonic arrangement and the nobility of the forms introduced, has been able to dignify the agony, and elevate the horror to a tragic dignity. It is the most finished dramatic work which the century produced in Italy."

The picture, which has become much darkened and obscured by time, was taken to Paris by Napoleon's marshals, but later restored to the Bologna Gallery, where it now hangs.

'MADONNA WITH ST. FRANCIS AND ST. CHRISTINA'

PLATE X

THIS picture, now in the Gallery at Faenza, is a fine, though not familiar specimen of Guido's work, probably dating from his early period. It shows St. Francis in the habit of the Order of which he was the founder, and St. Christina adoring the enthroned Madonna and Child. In spite of the smoky coloring, which has become darkened by time, and the lack of strength in the faces, this picture evidences Guido's power as a composer, and possesses a dignity of effect lacking in too many of his later works.

A LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL PAINTINGS BY GUIDO RENI
WITH THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS

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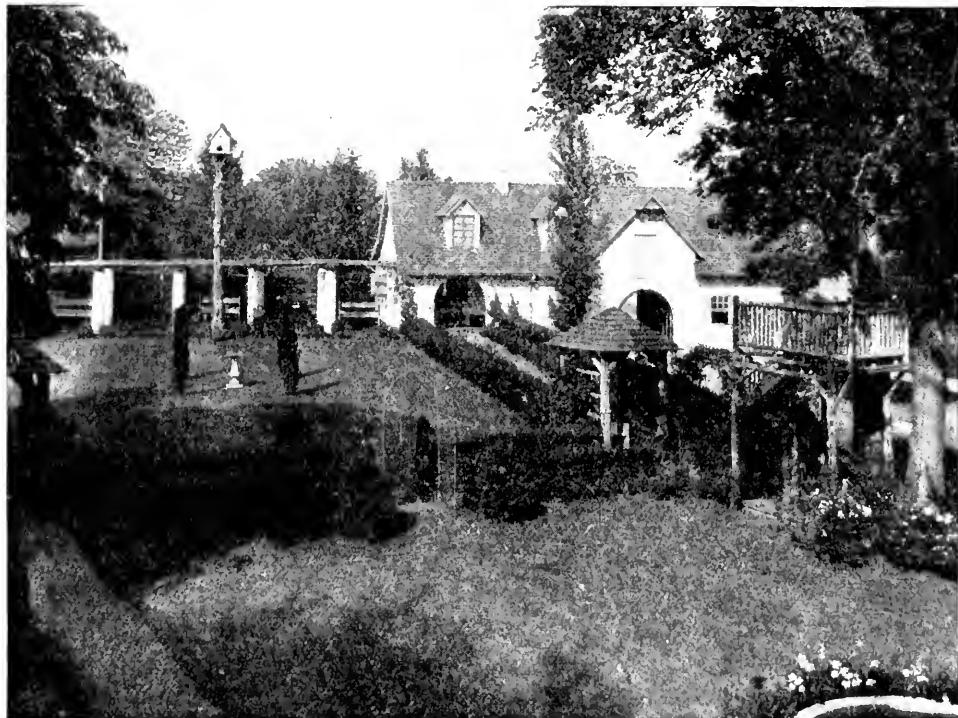
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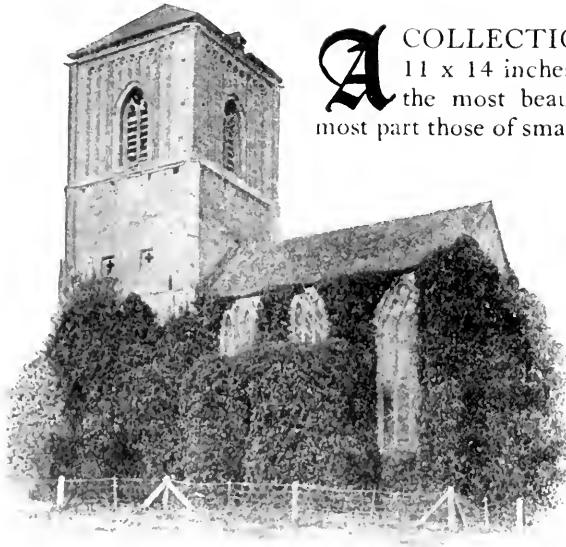
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